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grammatical change. *Stān, stēn* and *gān, gēn* ar clast without a word of explanation with the sixth and seventh ablaut series respectively. The student must necessarily judge the infinitiv forms to be those of strong verbs which, of course, they ar not. The fact that they ar later (§ 95, § 96) conjugated under the anomalous verbs does not clear up the matter, as no explanation is given here either.

The edition has few typographical errors or omissions. I hav noted only the following: § 7 read: *blintaz* for *blindaz*; § 16 Note, next to last line, read: MHG. *iu* for *ie*; § 26 for OHG. *cc* read: *cch* or *ck*; § 90 at end, add: *zucken, zücken*; § 93 under *sol* add at end: subj. *solte* and *sölte*; also read: *mähte* for *mehte* two lines below. In § 97 at end add: imper. *wis, bis; wesen, sîn; weset, sît*.

The chapter on syntax (three and one-half pages) and the notes (about two pages to 90 pages of text) ar, needless to say, inadequate. In the syntax Wright follows Paul's chapter on syntax very closely, picking out rule and example here and there, but leaving out numerous rules just as important as those he givs.

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NOTE ON DANTE, *Inferno* VIII, 7

In the *Inferno* VIII, 7 Dante terms his illustrious guide, 'the sea of all wisdom'—

Ed io mi volsi al mar di tutto il senno:
Dissi: etc.

The metaphor is striking but so far as English is concerned it is odd enough to deserve comment. For example, the rendition of it in some of our standard translations of the *Inferno* is in itself a proof that in the same circumstances and to produce the same effect no English poet of high rank would employ it unless he had some special reason. Of course it does not follow that the same is true of Italian. On the contrary, it may be presumed that the metaphor is more or less familiar in modern Italian. I observe

for example that *un mar di sapienza* is one of the figurative phrases quoted in Petrucchi's standard dictionary, *s. v. mare*. Of course the final settlement of this point must be left to those whose knowledge of the language and literature of Italy entitles them to speak with authority. But even though they should tell me that the metaphor was quite common I should still have a right to ask whether there were not a reason for it. And in default of any definite proof to the contrary I should venture upon the following tentative answer:

Every cultivated language is rich with phrases and turns, many of them in common use, which in each case go back to some one definite authority. For example, let us take such a familiar phrase as "a sea of troubles."¹ So far as English is concerned the very existence of it is due to Shakespeare's famous line,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.

So in Italian, however common such an expression as *un mar di sapienza* may be, are we not fairly safe in assuming that it owes its existence ultimately to the very phrase which we are discussing? That this is actually the case is rendered all the more likely by the fact that Dante holds the same commanding position in the history of Italian that Shakespeare does in the history of English.

It seems more than probable then that Dante himself was the first Italian to speak of any one as a *mar di senno*. If so, it would be permissible to conclude that he had some special reason for it. And that this actually was the case is suggested by at least two items of evidence.

The first is negative. In Italian—which in figurative usage generally retains to a remarkable extent the old Latin feeling—the idiomatic traditional metaphor for the idea which Dante wished to express seems to have been, so far as I can discover, either a treasure house or a well-spring, an inexhaustible fount. Dante rejected them both and chose the sea. Why?

The second item is positive. So far as it goes it attempts to

¹ The *phrase* is Shakespearian, not the *metaphor*. The metaphor is as old as Aeschylus. See also Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, II, 1-5. (Skeat's edition). I hope to take up the classical and humanistic tradition of this metaphor in a future note.

tell us why. It is a well known fact that Dante was thoroughly familiar with that strange phenomenon, the medieval tradition of Vergil. Indeed, as was quite natural, he was even to a certain extent dominated by it. In this very passage for example nothing could be more characteristic of that tradition nor a more faithful reflection of it than the extraordinary and exclusive emphasis not on Vergil's genius as a poet and as a creative artist—his real claims to greatness—but on Vergil's attainments as a scholar and philosopher.

On general principles, therefore, we might at least assume as a working hypothesis that the poet's choice of the metaphor under discussion was also suggested by his familiarity with that same tradition. At all events we may observe that Dante was fond of etymologizing. It was characteristic of his age, it was notably characteristic of that very tradition which, as we have just seen, is faithfully reflected in this passage. The medieval exponents of that tradition were notably fond of etymologizing on Vergil's name. In that way they managed to extract not only proofs of his surpassing ability but even the main facts, real or supposed, of his career and personality. I quote one of these which seems to be germane to our discussion. It is an explanation of the origin and true meaning of Vergil's cognomen, Maro.

"Maro," we are informed, "dictus est a mare. Sicut enim mare abundat aqua, ita et ipsi affluebat sapientia plus ceteris poetis." This occurs in a life of the poet in the Codex Gudianus, a Vergilian manuscript of the ninth century (see Heyne-Wagner's *Vergil*, note on the Donatus Life, 22, and Comparetti's *Virgilio nel Medio Evo*, I, p. 195).

Without doubt this precious item of information along with many others of a similar sort was current in the thirteenth century schools, and Dante was of all men the most likely to be familiar with it.

Maro dictus est a mare. Sicut enim mare abundat aqua, ita et ipsi affluebat sapientia plus ceteris poetis.

Ed io mi volsi al mar di tutto il senno:
Dissi: etc.

Is the resemblance merely a matter of chance, or is the long-forgotten lucubration of some unknown medieval sciolist ultimately responsible for a striking phrase in one of the greatest poets of the world? In a matter like this I am not in a position to speak with authority. Therefore, to quote the words of the freedman, Niceros, at the conclusion of his famous werewolf story in Petronius, *Viderint alii quid de hoc exopinissent*.

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